FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

Working Group on Alternative Measures

Draft Report

January 24, 2011

Note: The charter of the U.S. Department of Education's Committee on Measures of Student Success (Committee) provides for working groups to assist the Committee in carrying out its duties. The working groups are responsible for developing materials to be provided to the entire Committee for full deliberation and discussion during its meetings. This draft document has been prepared by a Committee working group. This document does not represent the final recommendations of the Committee. The information and opinions included are the products of working group discussions and do not necessarily represent the views of the entire Committee or the policies of the U.S. Department of Education.

The purpose of the alternative measures working group was to examine issues related to measures of student success *other than* progression and completion measures such as retention, transfer, completion, and graduation rates. The working group was charged with exploring student learning outcomes, employment outcomes, and other outcomes associated with the multifaceted missions of two-year institutions. The working group was asked to consider which measures could be used by the Department in its disclosure and/or reporting requirements and speak to the viability of using such measures.

The working group (Kevin Carey, Jacob Fraire, Sharon Kristovich, Geri Palast, and Linda Thor along with Tom Bailey and Archie Cubarrubia) met by conference call on January 13, 2011 to examine issues related to alternative measures of student success. Overall issues were identified as well as three specific areas of alternative measures were discussed: Student Learning, Developmental Progression and Employment. The group acknowledged that there may also be other measures of student success that could be considered. Prior to the meeting, the group also compiled examples of metrics either already in use or being proposed by external student success initiatives. What follows is a summary of the issues discussed and metrics compiled.

<u>Overall Considerations</u>

<u>Issues</u>

- "Success" may mean different things to different students at different types of institutions. Some key questions to address when looking at alternative measures:
  - o Whose domain is a particular measure?
    - ▪ What's the appropriate role of the federal government?

- What's the appropriate role of states?
- What's the appropriate role of institutions?
  - How will outcomes be measured?
  - How will acceptable levels of performance be determined?
  - If appropriate, how should data be disclosed or reported?
- What is the purpose of disclosing or reporting alternative measures of success?
  - Is it to improve consumer information?
  - Is it to improve accountability?
  - We need to consider the consumers' viewpoint when considering this issue.

Potential Areas for Recommendations

- The working group recommends reporting alternative measures of student success to make it more available to the public.
  - Some members suggest voluntary reporting:
    - It gives institutions flexibility to report items that reflect their mission.
    - May help reduce burden by dovetailing with other reporting initiatives.
  - Other members suggest mandatory reporting if institutions are already publicly reporting it elsewhere.
  - Regardless of whether reporting should be voluntary or mandatory, the group agreed that some universal (e.g., common to all institutions) measures should be considered as well.
    - This common information should be reported in a consistent and accessible format to make it easy to understand and compare.
- Measures should include student populations that have been typically excluded (e.g., part-time students, students in developmental education, etc.).
  - In addition, the "first-time" undergraduate cohort needs to distinguish amongst "first-time in college" and "first-time at the reporting institution."
- For any outcomes measured, the Department needs to weigh the additional administrative burden to institutions against the benefits of transparency, informing students and policy formation.
- The Department should encourage institutions to provide/disclose alternative measures of success.
  - Encourage institutions to provide information in a user friendly and accessible format; and to highlight important information instead of just making the information available.

Student Learning

Issues

- The desired level of student learning outcomes for two-year institutions appropriate for disclosure or reporting needs to be more clearly defined. For instance, what level are we looking at: course, program, or degree?
- The area of student learning outcomes is very diverse with many potential items for institutions to report.

- The group suggested exploring learning outcomes across the different domains of learning:
    - General Education
    - Occupational/Certifications
    - Developmental Education/Introductory level

Potential Areas for Recommendations

- The federal government has a role in helping to make data more easily available to the public, even if such data are already being reported to other groups such as states and accrediting agencies. There was also some discussion of the Department serving as a venue for comprehensive information about institutional performance and not just a data repository.
- There was agreement by the working group to recommend that the federal government should find ways to encourage colleges to disclose or report some form of student learning data in a reasonable format.

Examples of Student Learning Metrics

Outcome	Sources	Notes/Comments
Pass Rates:		
Annual percent of graduates passing licensure examinations	VFA[1]	Also listed in employment metrics.
Course Completion:		
Course completion: percentage of credit hours completed out of those attempted during an academic year.	NGA[2]	Other initiatives look at attempted and earned credit hours through a variety of methods.
External Instruments/Surveys:		
Results from the Community College Learning Assessment (CCLA)	CCLA[3]	CLA measures critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication. Fee to colleges to participate.
Results from the Community College Student Survey of Engagement (CCSSE)	CCSSE[4]	CCSSE measure student engagement. Research suggests a correlation between student engagement and learning. Fee to colleges to participate.

Note: The metrics presented here are for illustrative purposes and not an endorsement by the working group.

Developmental Education Progression

Issues

- The group acknowledges that this area overlaps with the Progression and Completion Working Group and therefore does not want to spend too much time duplicating efforts.
- The role developmental education plays in student success at many two-year institutions is increasing.
- Developmental education for two-year institutions appropriate for disclosure or reporting needs to be clearly defined. For instance, should we look at the institution, or subject level?

Potential Areas for Recommendations

- Perhaps developmental education should be looked at as a separate cohort.
- Might want to consider including introductory course success with developmental progression.

Examples of Developmental Progression Metrics

Outcome	Sources	Notes/Comments
Developmental Education:		
Enrollment in developmental education: number and percentage of entering first-time undergraduates who place into and enroll in developmental math, English/reading.	NGA, VFA	
Success beyond developmental education: number and percentage of first-time undergraduates who complete a developmental education course in math, English/reading. Also, number and percentage of students who complete a developmental course and then complete a college-level course in the same subject	NGA, VFA	
Introductory Course Success:		
Success in first-year college courses: annual number and percentage of entering first-time undergraduates who complete entry college-level math and English/reading courses within the first two consecutive academic years	NGA	Complete College America (CCA) also has a metric similar to this.

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Employment

Issues

- Updates on the Department's proposed regulations on gainful employment:
  - Final regulations to ensure program integrity in federal financial aid programs were published on October 29, 2010, and will go into effect on July 1, 2011. These regulations will address sections of the Department's gainful employment proposal as well as 13 other issues in an effort to protect students.

  - The Department plans to publish final regulations in early 2011 on the remaining portions of the gainful employment proposals dealing with a program's eligibility to receive federal student aid.

- What measures of employment outcomes—particularly those explicitly tied to the mission of two-year institutions (e.g., certifications, licensing)—could potentially be used?

Potential Areas for Recommendations

- The group agreed that measures of employment outcomes being examined by the Committee should not be tied to the gainful employment reporting that is being proposed in the Department's regulations.
  - However, there is merit in requiring institutions to report average student debt so that future students may be able to compare institutions based on how much they might expect to borrow at an institution, based on average debt level for similar/same degree/certificate program. Reporting average student debt also allows policy makers in monitoring loan growth/ dependency relative to credential attainment.
- Service/market areas will need to be well-defined.

Examples of Employment Metrics

Outcome	Source(s)	Notes/Comments
Overall Workforce Measures:		
Total workforce enrollment /retention	VFA	
Market Penetration: Annual ratio of undergraduate degrees and certificates (of at least one year in program length) awarded relative to the state's population aged 18-24 years old with a high school diploma.	NGA, CCA[5]	

Preparation for Employment and Employment Measures:		
Annual percent of graduates passing licensure examinations	VFA	Also listed in student learning outcomes
CTE degree and certificate graduates either employed with livable wage or enrolled in further education	VFA	
Wage growth of graduates (median incomes)	VFA	
Workforce Development:		
Annual course enrollments in non-credit workforce development courses	VFA	
Transition from non-credit to credit: the percentage of students enrolled in non-credit courses that within one year of completing the course enroll in credit course work	VFA	
Noncredit programs (not courses): if colleges have programs, report the outcomes of students that complete the program	VFA	
Annual granting of a state or industry-recognized credential (volume)	VFA	

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[1] Voluntary Framework of Accountability
http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/vfa/Pages/ProposedMeasures.aspx

[2] National Governors Association's *Complete to Compete*
http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/1007COMMONCOLLEGEMETRICS.PDF

[3] Community College Learning Assessment (CCLA)
http://www.cae.org/content/pro_communcollege.htm

[4] Community College Student Survey of Engagement (CCSSE)
http://www.ccsse.org/

[5] Complete College America: Metrics Technical Guide 10/10
http://www.completecollege.org/path_forward/commonmetrics/